

Edwardsville Township Hosts Women's Health and Pregnancy Resources Forum

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville Township hosted its monthly lunch-and-learn on Friday, March 22, 2024. This month's topic was Women's Health and Pregnancy Resources, which stirred up controversy and protesters outside the Edwardsville Public Library where the event was held.

Speakers shared information about local resources for women's health, from breast cancer screenings to birth control options. Pro-life protesters and pro-choice protesters were both in attendance.

Madison County Health Department

Anna House with the Madison County Health Department spoke about the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program, which provides free screenings for women ages 21 or up. The program offers breast exams, mammograms, pap/HPV tests and pelvic exams.

"It's a program that helps women get free screenings, mammogram screenings, cervical screenings. The only thing they need to do is fill out an application," House explained.

The program is targeted for women without health insurance, Medicaid or Medicare. But Madison County Health Department will also provide assistance for those with high insurance deductibles. For more information, visit the [official Madison County Health Department website](#).

Planned Parenthood

Crystal Ellis, a sexual health training coordinator with Planned Parenthood, shared information about Planned Parenthood's programs and services. Ellis explained that they teach people about sexual decision-making, consent, contraception, relationships and more. They also provide gynecological care, birth control, gender-affirming care and other health services.

"Our goal is to provide comprehensive sex education to any and all folks who need it, from the womb to the tomb," Ellis said. "It is more than just one particular service that we provide here."

Planned Parenthood does not require insurance. For more information, visit PlannedParenthood.org.

Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation

Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation (SIHF) has a location based in Alton and several more spread throughout the state. Dr. Darcy Graham explained that they offer a

variety of services, from family medicine and pediatric care to dental and psychiatric care. This includes women's health.

"Each location is unique. Almost every one of them offers women's health services," she said. "We service over 1,100 patients a day throughout the whole SIHF. And one thing that is awesome about it is we're federally funded, so we take all insurance. We also take no insurance. No one is ever turned away because they can't pay a bill."

Graham said they try to make healthcare "as easy as possible and as affordable as possible." For more information about SIHF, check out [SIHF.org](https://www.sihf.org).

Protests

There were several protesters outside the library in response to Planned Parenthood's presence at the lunch-and-learn.

"I'm here today because they're having Planned Parenthood speak as a pregnancy resource, and I think if you do your research, you know that the only resource they are is abortion," said Robin Hake.

Hake said there are several "pregnancy help centers" and organizations in the area, including A Beacon of Light Pregnancy Center, 40 Days Right for Life and Thrive.

Other protesters held "Stand with Planned Parenthood" signs and voiced their support for the organization.

"I came because I heard there were going to be counter-protesters. I believe in Planned Parenthood and their mission," Andi Smith said. "They do good work. People talk about abortion that they do, but they also provide essential women's healthcare."

Edwardsville Township will host their next lunch-and-learn on April 12, 2024. The topic is Severe Weather Preparedness. You can find out more about Edwardsville Township at their official website at [EdwardsvilleTownship.com](https://www.edwardsvilletownship.com).